

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace paragraph [0004] with the following amended paragraph:

[0004] Digital postal indicia using encryption technologies are extremely secure. In general, without knowledge of the proper encryption keys, it is essentially impossible to produce a counterfeit digital indicium. However, digital indicia are subject, as are all postal indicia, to "rubber-stamp" ~~counterfeiting, duplication or replay attack~~ where a valid indicium is scanned and reproduced on multiple mail pieces. To prevent such "rubber-stamp" ~~counterfeiting, duplication~~ it is known to incorporate information from the address block of the mail piece into the postal indicium. Because space on an envelope is limited, typically only a small portion of the information in the address block will be incorporated into the indicium.

Please replace paragraph [0005] with the following amended paragraph:

[0005] In Figure 1, typical prior art mailing system 10 includes address printer controller 12, address printer 14, postage meter 16, and indicia printer 20. Address printer controller 12 receives address information from a data processing system (not shown), generates a bitmap, and controls address printer 12 to print address block A, representative of the address, on envelope E. Meter 16 receives postage information, and other information, from the data processing system. Meter 16 also receives characterizing information descriptive of block A from address printer controller 12. The information received can be either text-based or image-based. Text-based information is descriptive of the words or characters making up the address, (e.g., ASCII code) while image-based information is descriptive of the actual printed image (~~bits of pixels~~) in the address block. Meter 16 combines the characterizing information with the postage value and other information, typically digitally signs the combination, generates a bitmap representative of an indicium including the ~~digitally signed combination, signature~~ and

controls indicia printer 20 to print indicium I on envelope E. When the mail piece is received by a postal service, the address block can be scanned again, and the information regenerated from the scanned address block compared to information recovered from indicium I; thus tying indicium I to the particular mail piece. (Note that since the indicium is cryptographically linked to the address on the mail piece, printer 20 need not be a secure printer; but can be a general purpose printer which can be controlled by other devices for other uses.) Commonly assigned, provisional application *System And Method For Mail Destination Address Information Encoding Protection And Recovery In Postal Payment*, (Attorney Docket F-520) discloses a system similar to that of the Figure 1 using text-based characterizations of the address block.

Please replace paragraph [0006] with the following amended paragraph:

[0006] While useful for its intended purpose, system of Figure 1 and similarly systems still have problems. It has proven difficult to reliably recover textual information from address blocks during the validation process using available optical character recognition (OCR) techniques. Attempts to increase the robustness of text-based systems by incorporation of additional information and/or the use of error correcting codes has resulted in undesirable increases in indicia size and computational complexity. Thus, it is an object of the present invention to provide a method and system for providing descriptive information which will substantially uniquely identify a block of text in a robust and compact manner. (By "robust and compact" herein is meant information which is small enough in quantity to be incorporated into postal indicia yet will identify a text block, and distinguish among text blocks, with sufficient reliability to deter "rubber stamp" ~~counterfeiting duplication~~, despite errors introduced by the printing and/or scanning processes.)

Please replace paragraph [0009] with the following amended paragraph:

[0009] In accordance with another aspect of the subject invention, the other printed ~~material block~~ is an address block and the characterizing information includes measurements of word lengths of words comprised in the address block.